



# JOHNSONIAN NEWS LETTER

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This issue comes fast on the heels of the last — more speedily than usual. But your editor is off to England, and there is no prospect of time for another number before fall. His address in London during July will be 10 Bedford Place, W.C. 1.

## The New Rambler

Issue No. 14 of the little journal of the Johnson Society of London, which appears about twice a year under the title of *The New Rambler*, comes in a new format. Previously it has been mimeographed, and because of difficulties of production and the scarcity of paper the available number was limited. With the January 1949 issue, however, it has changed into an attractively printed eight page folder. And we gather from a recent letter from the editor that American subscriptions will now be welcomed. The price per issue is two shillings. If you are interested write to A. Lloyd Jones, Esq., 102 Gordon Road, Ealing W. 13, London.

In the last issue there are a number of interesting items: an obituary of Lord Harmsworth; an account of a recent bequest to renovate the statue of Dr. Johnson in the little garden of St. Clement Dane's Church; the first part of an essay by H.J.D. Lemon on "Dr. Johnson and the Classics"; and numerous comments on recent Johnsonian publications, etc.

## Some Suggestions

We have had a number of suggestions recently of new things which we might do in the *JNL*. For example, Edward Hooker (U.C.L.A.) writes: "A great many scholars who are buying books would like lists from the university presses (including Oxford and Cambridge) of scholarly works in the field of the *JNL* which are still in print, especially books published from about 1925 to 1945, and their present prices. Would it be practical to get such lists

from the university presses and print them in your News Letter, perhaps one list each issue?" Certainly the problem of out-of-print books, and that of changing prices, is one constantly affecting all of us. Would you like to see the *JNL* run such lists?

Howard Vincent (Ill. Inst. of Tech.) writes: "I was amused at the facetious suggestion on page 4 [of the Feb. *JNL*] that some dragon might have committed the Johnston-Boswell correspondence to the flames. Has anyone ever made a study of the tons of letters, diaries, and other manuscripts which tradition says have been committed to the flames by defensive, antagonistic, ashamed, and other misguided possessors? It might make an amusing article to collect these stories and study them." We suspect that there would almost be enough material for a book.

At the Newhouse Galleries in New York we recently saw some interesting Reynolds portraits (we heard of them through Ted Hilles), one of Mrs. Thrale's cousin, Robert Salusbury Cotton, not hitherto well known. It was painted, Hilles tells us, in 1761-62. What might be a worth-while project, which we hope one of our readers may wish to take on, would be a check-list of 18th century portraits having literary associations now in the United States. Anyone interested?

### M.L.A. Group VIII Program

From Dick Boys (Mich.) we now have the complete Group VIII program for September. The general topic is to be "The Relationship of the Age of Johnson to Later Criticism." The first paper by John Robert Moore (Indiana) is entitled "Dr. Johnson's Poetical Theory and Practice, as Viewed by His Successors"; the second paper by Richard Fogle (Tulane) is entitled "Critical Principles from the Age of Johnson to the Romantic Period." The discussion will be led by Bertrand Bronson (Calif. at Berkeley), and Edward Hooker (U.C.L.A.).

### A New Acquisition at the Rylands Library

From F. Taylor at the John Rylands Library in Manchester comes the news of the recent acquisition by the library of manuscript "Journals of Dorothy Richardson, daughter of the Rev. Henry Richardson (1710-1778), rector of Thornton in Craven, Yorkshire (WR). They consist of five volumes containing holograph accounts, with numerous historical, topographical and antiquarian descrip-



tions interspersed, of journeys and tours made by her in various parts of England between 1781 and 1802, viz. (1) Yorkshire (WR), Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Lancashire (2) Oxford and Bath (3) London — in 1775 and 1785 (4) Yorkshire (NR) and Lancashire, and (5) Yorkshire (ER)." Anyone who would like further details should write direct to Taylor at the Library.

### Augustan Reprint Society

The latest facsimile reprints of the *ARS* are concerned with the drama. Henry Nevil Payne's *The Fatal Jealousie* (1673), with an Introduction by Willard Thorp (Princeton) makes available a little known Restoration play, which Thorp insists has real "intrinsic merit."

The re-issuing, as Extra Series, No. 1, of Nicholas Rowe's *Life of Shakespeare* (1709) was a happy thought. With Samuel Monk's admirable Introduction, it should be a valuable addition to the libraries of Shakespearian and 18th century scholars. Extra copies may be secured for one dollar from the *ARS*, 310 Royce Hall, Univ. of Calif. at Los Angeles.

### Alexander Pope and His Contemporaries

By this time you should all have received the subscription blanks for the volume of essays honoring George Sherburn. Let us remind you that in order to get your name in the printed list of subscribers the form must be returned to the Oxford Press by July 1st. The place and the date of presentation will be New York City, Thursday, Dec. 29th.

### Pope in America

Under the title *Alexander Pope's Prestige in America, 1725-1835* Agnes Marie Sibley's (Lindenwood) investigation of the early reputation of Pope on this side of the Atlantic has just been published by the King's Crown Press. She shows clearly how widespread was the reading and admiration (what we have always assumed without the evidence), and discusses the reasons for the universal popularity of Pope's works. The most widely read by our American ancestors was the *Essay on Man*. In an appendix she lists around 160 editions of this work printed in America in a little over one hundred years. At the height of its popularity there were thirty-five reprints of the poem within a decade. Next in popularity to the *Essay on Man* were

the translation of Homer and the *Messiah*. The more bitter satires, which appeal so to our sensibility, were much less read by the colonists than Pope's religious and philosophical poems.

All this is about what we might have supposed, but it is very valuable to have the accurate facts — drawn from the numbers of editions, booksellers' newspaper advertisements, old catalogues, and contemporary references in letters and diaries. It is of importance also to have pointed out the fact that the devout Puritanical settlers found little shocking or deistical in the *Essay of Man*; and we think you will be convinced by Agnes Sibley's explanation of the reason. Since we helped slightly with the plan of the book, we do not feel able to praise it as highly as we should like. But we believe you will find very interesting this investigation of the reading habits of our ancestors.

### The Adventures of Lindamira a Lady of Quality

We shamefacedly confess that we had never heard of *The Adventures of Lindamira* until Ben Boyce (Nebraska) proposed to bring out a modern edition. First published in 1702, it was later, in 1713, re-issued as *The Lover's Secretary*, but despite a number of subsequent printings it is today a fairly rare little volume. Now it is handsomely republished by the Univ. of Minn. Press from what may possibly be a unique copy of the first edition, with a valuable Introduction and bibliographical notes by Boyce.

As one of the earliest epistolary novels in English, and comparing favorably in "naturalness, humor, and plausibility" (so the editor insists) with the work of Aphra Behn, Congreve, and even Defoe, it would certainly appear to deserve a new hearing. We ourselves have found it very entertaining.

In his Editor's Introduction Boyce has a remark which we would like to nominate as our favorite sentence of the year. In discussing the fact that so little has been known about the novel, he adds: "The explanation for the long neglect of this interesting little book is, I fear, the one given by Mr. D. B. Wyndham Lewis to account for his having ignored certain source books on François Villon — namely, that copies could be found only in libraries."

### Cover His Face

We have just seen an advance copy of a mystery story, with the above title, which is not to be issued by Lippincott until July.



But in order that you may be watching for it, we mention the book in this issue. Written by the detective story writer who goes by the name of Thomas Kyd, it has as its hero a serious young research scholar who is determined to find a complete file of the *Birmingham Journal*, to which Johnson is supposed to have contributed essays in 1732-33. He goes to England, becomes involved in a brutal murder, and is catapulted into an exciting chase. The fast moving plot will hold your interest, but what will certainly make the book appeal even more to our readers is the amusing spoofing throughout of the research enthusiast. Rarely have we had such entertaining, yet sympathetic, fun poked at us. In one of the most thrilling moments the hero is startled to find on a table in the house of the murdered man three copies of the 1735 edition of Father Lobo's *Voyage to Abyssinia*. And in the moment of greatest despair there is the comfort of silently reciting "The Vanity of Human Wishes." But the passage which drew the loudest guffaws from your editor was the description of finding folded in the hero's wallet the latest number of *The Augustan Newsletter*.

### Miscellaneous News Items

Dick Boys has received this spring the Henry Russell Award at the Univ. of Mich., given to the assistant professor showing the highest promise for the future on the basis of past scholarly achievement. The recipient in 1948 was an expert in biochemistry. Many congratulations on this fine honor! Boys is now reading page proof of *Sir Richard Blackmore and the Wits*, a study of the literary controversy growing out of the publication of *Commendatory Verses on the Author of the Two Arthurs and the Satyr against Wit* (1700). It should be out this summer.

H. Bunker Wright (Miami Univ.) sends further information about the proposed edition of Prior, which he and Monroe K. Spears (Vanderbilt) have been planning. What is proposed is a definitive edition of Prior's literary works, with critical introductions and full annotation. There never has been a thorough study of canon, chronology and texts. Wright adds that he has already discovered a few unpublished pieces in prose and verse, and has in his possession manuscripts heretofore unused by any editor. Spears will spend the summer in England and Wright at the Huntington Library working on the project.

We are always glad to welcome our sister publication, *The Seven-*

*teenth Century News Letter*, each issue packed with information. Plans are under way for the establishment of a *Victorian News Letter*, to be edited by William S. Knickerbocker of Emerson College, Boston. Any help or suggestions you may give him we know will be appreciated.

We see announced in *ILS* another work concerned with "the enigma of Swift's relations with Stella and Vanessa" — this one by Miss Evelyn Hardy. She insists former biographers have overlooked the significance of Swift's childhood, and believes that his behaviour toward the two ladies "is rooted in those formative years." Well, we will wait to see what she can prove, but frankly we are a bit skeptical unless new factual evidence has been discovered.

Two other books which have been listed, but which we have not yet seen are: Lord Killanin, *Sir Godfrey Kneller and His Times*; and Erwin Weide, *Henry Fieldings Komödien und die Restaurationskomödie*, published in Hamburg.

We have a fine long letter from Arthur Secord who has been spending the year in England. He writes of the theatrical highlights in London — *The Way of the World*, with Edith Evans as Lady Wishfort, among other attractions. He adds: "One of the best lectures I have heard here was Geoffrey Tillotson's before the British Academy.... As a guest of Mr. Edmund Nicholls, I heard Arnold Toynbee speak on Gibbon before the Liberal Club. He emphasized Gibbon's optimism. Gibbon thought his own age to be a peak of culture like that of the Antonines, except that this time it was permanent. At the monthly meetings of the Johnson Society, Richard Capell, music critic of the *Daily Telegram*, spoke on the great Dr. Burney; Canon Fox of Westminster on Gray (Johnson's Life); and Margaret Barton, on Garrick and Johnson. In the discussion afterward, Miss Barton expressed regret that in her *Garrick* she had spoken of the Johnsons as living a cat and dog life, but would not admit that they were as happy as the Garricks."

Although we have never met some of our subscribers — among them residents of China, Australia, The Netherlands — we did last fall see one Argentinian subscriber, and this week had a visit from a loyal Johnsonian from Saudi Arabia, Louis E. Goodyear. A lawyer connected with the Arabian American Oil Co., he is very much interested in Johnson and his legal pronouncements. When Goodyear flew in to New York the other day one of his first visits was to the inner sanctum of the *JNL*. We like that kind of loyalty!



## Some Recent Johnsonian Publications

In the series of Falcon Prose Classics there has recently appeared a slim volume containing passages from Johnson's works, edited with an Introduction by Julian Symons. The selection is meagre, but the Introduction appeals to us greatly, as one more bit of evidence of the changing tide of opinion about Johnson the writer. Symons is no professional Johnson scholar, no research professor, but instead a practicing poet and novelist. To have him come to the defense of Johnson's writings as forcibly as he does means something about the new sensibility of our day. He closes with the plea (containing, to be sure, one parenthetical remark to which we would not agree) "It is time for Johnson's Works to be taken down from the library shelves; time for the Johnsonians to turn from their contemplation of a character as mythical as Sherlock Holmes (and subjected to the same tediously intense and useless research) and to open, however hesitantly, the pages of *The Idler*; time for an act of justice towards one who was a great writer as well as a remarkable man."

Sir Arnold McNair's *Dr. Johnson and the Law* has now been issued in this country by the American Branch of the Cambridge Univ. Press (now in new quarters at 51 Madison Ave., New York City). A pleasant book by an internationally known lawyer, it gathers together much of what has been known of Johnson's legal interests. It is not, however, an exhaustive examination of the subject. A much more thorough study of his legal writing has been made by Ned McAdam (N.Y.U.), but when his book will appear is not certain.

To be mentioned also are J.H. Hagstrom's excellent article "Johnson's Conception of the Beautiful, the Pathetic, and the Sublime" in the March *PMLA*; and "Johnson and Scaliger on Dictionary Making" by V.R. in the April 16, *N & Q*.

## Hodge

We wonder how many of you can tell the color of Johnson's famous cat, "Hodge," or the approximate date of his death? Your editor admits complete ignorance on the subject. But now comes Fritz Liebert (Yale) with a delightful discovery — a long-forgotten elegy on the death of "Hodge," written by Percivale Stockdale. Liebert has reproduced the elegy, together with a note on Johnson's cats, in a little limited edition of one hundred copies.

The elegy appeared in a small volume of miscellanies in prose

and verse, issued by Stockdale in 1778. In his collected poetical works (1810) the date of the poem is given as 1764, but since there is much evidence that Hodge was alive in the late sixties, the date cannot be accepted as valid evidence with which to fix the year of the cat's death. The elegy opens with the not too inspired lines:

Let not the honest muse disdain  
 For Hodge to wake the plaintive strain.  
 Shall poets prostitute their lays  
 In offering venal Statesmen praise;  
 By them shall flowers Parnassian bloom  
 Around the tyrant's gaudy tomb;  
 And shall not Hodge's memory claim  
 Of innocence the candid fame;  
 Shall not *his* worth a poem fill,  
 Who never thought, nor uttered ill;  
 Who, by his master when caressed  
 Warmly his gratitude expressed;  
 And never failed his thanks to purr  
 Whene'er he stroaked his sable furr?

The general conduct if we trace  
 Of our articulating race,  
 Hodge's example we shall find  
 A keen reproof to human kind.

.....

As Liebert points out, "If we cannot depend on the *Elegy* to establish the date of *Hodge's* death, it does supply another notable fact: the color of the immortal animal. *Hodge* was a black cat. *Stockdale* speaks of the cat's 'sable furr' and he was almost certainly referring not to the actual brown color of the sable's pelt but to the figurative black for which the adjective usually stands." But when your editor pointed out to Liebert that the color of Hodge had not been established beyond a shadow of a doubt, with typical enthusiasm he went back for more evidence. Just as we go to press there comes the following:

"It is true that Johnson, in a note on *Hamlet*, observes that the fur of sables is not black. He does, however, introduce a separate definition of 'sable' in the *Dictionary* as 'black,' and even in the other definition, as 'fur,' illustrates its heraldic use as 'black.' But it must be noted that Stockdale, not Johnson, is the author of the poem on Hodge, and it is to his use of the



word that we must look. Scrupulous examination of all Stockdale's poetry reveals five passages in which 'sable' is used; it refers to clouds twice, to funeral trappings, to Vulcan, and to the genii of Pluto. I think it must be admitted that storms, mourning, and devils are seldom if ever brown. I have not yet recovered sufficiently from Stockdale's poetry to undertake examining his prose, but I am convinced an interim conclusion may be advanced that when he said 'sable' he meant 'black' and not 'brown,' and that Hodge was indeed a black cat."

Now can anyone find the actual date of Hodge's death?

### Johnsonian Queries

Fritz Liebert (Yale) asks: "Can any of the *JHL* faithful identify the author of the life of Johnson in the *Universal Magazine* for August 1784? It is signed 'L' and is plainly by someone who knew Johnson, since there are data in it which do not appear elsewhere. I am engaged in a study of the lives and biographical sketches of Johnson that appeared in his lifetime, and would be most grateful for any information about 'L' or about other 'lives' prior to 1785, of which I have already found seven, the earliest in 1762."

Bill Wimsatt (Yale) asks if we can give a reference for the following supposed Johnsonian saying: (not verbatim) Men would rather crawl about on their knees than think. Is this another apocryphal remark? Or can any of you give chapter and verse to document it?

### Johnson and the Letter "H"

In our February number we commented on an attack on Johnson in the December *Word Study* of the Merriam Co., and asked for further discussion. In the May issue of *Word Study* (XXIV, No. 5) there is printed a communication from Tom Mabbott (Hunter), which might well be repeated here. Mabbott writes:

"My friend and colleague, Professor Allen Hazen, points out that Johnson corrected his statement about the letter *h* in later issues of his *Dictionary*, and refers to a discussion in the *Johnson Bibliography*, by Courtney and Nichol Smith, 1925, pp. 41-42. But I am convinced the statement that in English *h* rarely begins any but the initial syllable of a 'word,' is not 'pure ignorance, but a slip of phraseology. Johnson seems to have observed that *h*

rarely begins any save the first syllable of an English *root*. Those who have confounded the doctor in your columns produced only compound and derivative words, or perhaps exclamations. Yes, I thought of the sunken fence, or 'haha,' but that, according to my Webster is probably derived from a French exclamation. The main text carries no other real word in HA-H; HE-H; HI-H; HO-H; HU-H; or HY-H, save Hohenzollern, which is not of English origin."

### An Edition of Mrs. Centlivre

James Sutherland (Queen Mary College, London) writes: "I wonder if I may make an enquiry through the News Letter? During the War I wrote up some material I had on Mrs. Centlivre, and published it with the title of "The Progress of Error" (*RES*, April 1942). At the time I remembered once having seen in Blackwell's shop in Oxford an edition of her plays, dated somewhere around 1735, and published (I think) by W. Feales, who was doing a lot of reprints of plays about that time. This edition was, I believe, a collection of her plays which Feales had already published separately, together with those he had not reprinted. But the important thing about it was that it had a Life of Mrs. Centlivre in Vol. I, which was different from any other that I had seen...at the time I thought I couldn't afford it. I went home, thought better of it, returned to Blackwell's to buy the set, and found that it had gone. I wonder if any of your readers knows of a copy of this obviously uncommon reprint."

### Johnson's Prose Style

Responding to our request for comments on a recent article, Bill Wimsatt (Yale) writes: "Mr. Cecil S. Emden's article 'Rhythmical Features in Dr. Johnson's Prose' in the January issue of *RES* (xxv, 33-54) performs the interesting service of going beyond the sketchy hints of earlier prosodists, Saintsbury and Tempest, and presenting for the first time a numerous and carefully chosen collection of Johnsonian sentence endings which in a fairly definite sense may be considered metrical. The rationale of such studies seems to me to be as follows: In any connected verbal discourse there is, besides the logical, paralleling structure of ideas (so pronounced in Johnson's prose), the fact that one word comes after another in a linear and non-logical sequence and alternation of phonetic qualities (in English notably stress and slack). Something like a temporal rhythm, a pattern of equals which may run with logic but mostly runs oblique to it, is therefore inevitable in verbal composition. When



this pattern is regularized or tightened up to take into strict account both number of syllables and secondary stresses, we have in English meter, and in the closed couplet, which Mr. Emden considers a close relation of Johnson's prose, the various interesting effects of coincidence, partial coincidence, and full counter-pattern in relation to the balanced parallels and antitheses of the sense. The pronounced parallels and distinctions of Johnson's prose may be said to provide a framework which invites a similar if more relaxed measuring of syllables and primary (if not secondary) stresses. In quoting some lines of Johnson's verse and a line of Dryden which Johnson all but incorporates in the close of a paragraph to Mrs. Thrale, Mr. Emden invites one to notice how a phrase which could function as couplet meter in virtue of both primary and secondary stresses might function in the larger or more casual movement of a prose clausula with disregard of secondary stresses. The reality of the clausulae which Mr. Emden presents (i.e., their actual difference from the surrounding prose context and their expressive tendency, at least toward a kind of emphasis) is well illustrated by the contrast in one of Johnson's *Rambler* revisions. In No. 178 the phrase 'by any conversation than that by which their notions may be rectified, or their comprehensions enlarged' became 'by any conversation than such as may rectify their notions or enlarge their comprehensions' (class 7). What seems to me less convincing or less necessary is Mr. Emden's elaborate division of the clausulae into eleven classes, according to the distribution of three-syllable or four-syllable feet or the conclusion on strong or weak syllables. Why not more classes? Why not fewer? That is, why not simply say that we have here, partly through Johnson's use of polysyllables (which are necessarily connected by shorter and less heavily accented words) and partly through his use of parallel phrases, a loose, semi-metrical situation which occasionally resolves itself into what may be measured as two, three, or four anapaestic or paenonic feet or a mixture of these? There is some virtue in parsimony of principle when explaining rhythm. Mr. Emden quotes the following as examples of the non-metrical close which yet has expressive rhythm: 'will lose all their power under the gripe of time, relax with numbness, and totter with debility' (*Rambler* 48); 'the books which are consulted by occasional necessity, and perused with impatience, seldom leave any traces on the mind' (*Idler* 74). It is I who have inserted the prosodic marks in these examples. The patterns do not conform to any of the eleven classes defined by Mr. Emden. The

second is less symmetrical than any of his. But what then? Why not classes 12 and 13? As for the frequency of such endings in other prose authors, it would take a lot of counting to be sure. It seems likely that the endings have the same relatively high frequency in Johnson's prose as the polysyllables and parallels in which they reside. Nevertheless, one may note with a certain interest Mr. Emden's statement that Johnson's practice 'is peculiar because it has no p̄āllēl īn āny ōthēr āuthōr' (class 4, if I mistake not). Finally, it is clear that these prose metrical forms (like verse itself, and like any other abstract forms, e.g., sentences or parallels) are capable of expressing almost anything. They are potentials, rather than concrete expressions. Thus Mr. Emden's class 3 (~~~~~) 'often has an air of kindly sentiment or even soft emotion,' 'serves to improve the contrast between a cold solitude and the warm colours of a life of social success,' and 'is well suited to the suggestion of fresh air and freedom.' Johnson himself, in the sceptical vein of his *Rambler* 94 on 'how far Milton has accommodated the sound to the sense,' has left us, as Mr. Emden is aware, some useful cues for this sort of analysis. 'It is scarcely to be doubted, that on many occasions we... ascribe to the numbers the effects of the sense.'

### A Few Recent Articles

A few articles to be mentioned are: J. Kinsley, "The Publication of Warton's 'Essay on Pope,'" in *MLR* for January; A. O. Aldridge, "The Pleasures of Pity" in *ELH* for March; W. Forbes Gray, "The Poet of 'The Seasons'" in the *Quarterly Review* for April; T. C. Fan, "Chinese Fables and Anti-Walpole Journalism" in *RES* for April; Harold F. Brooks, "The 'Imitation' in English Poetry, Especially in Formal Verse Satire, before the Age of Pope" also in *RES* for April; R. S. Forman, "Sir Horace Mann" (the relationship between Mann and Walpole) in *N & Q* for April 16th; Karl F. Thompson, "An Anonymous 'Epistle to James Boswell'" in the same issue of *N & Q*; and Eric Hardy, "Selborne Revisited" in the *Quarterly Review* for April.